

NEWS LESSON

What Makes a Day a Good One?

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What small thing can rescue an ordinary day?
2. Would your ideal day have more plans or more empty space?
3. Does knowing what makes you happy make it easier to do?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**surveys**	☐	A	the hours of the day when a person works, for example in a hospital
2	**patterns**	☐	B	a plan that shows what you will do and when
3	**socialising**	☐	C	show clearly that something is true
4	**timetable**	☐	D	spending time with other people for fun
5	**prove**	☐	E	things that happen in the same way again and again
6	**shift**	☐	F	see or understand something
7	**notice**	☐	G	be important
8	**matter**	☐	H	sets of questions that are given to many people to find out what they think or do

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Scientists looked at how more than 15,000 people spent their time. Being with other people stood out, but there is no perfect timetable.

1 What makes a day good? Maybe you enjoy breakfast, finish work and meet a friend. Or perhaps you do very little and still feel happy. American scientists wanted to find out which activities were connected with better days. Their research suggests that the way we spend our time can matter, but it does not provide a perfect timetable for happiness.

2 The researchers studied information from two large American surveys, one from 2013 and another from 2021. More than 15,000 people took part in total. They described what they did during a day and said whether that day felt better than usual. The team then used computer methods to look for patterns across more than one hundred different activities.

3 One result stood out: spending time with other people was strongly connected with having a good day. But after about two hours of socialising, extra time did not seem to make a big difference. Working was not necessarily a bad thing either. Days with up to six hours of work could still be good, while very long working hours were linked with lower happiness. The researchers also looked at exercise and free time.

4 These findings may sound like a useful daily recipe. Meet a friend, get some work done, go for a walk and avoid spending the whole evening in front of the television. But there is an important problem with this idea. People who already feel happy may be more likely to go out and meet friends. The study cannot prove that following its pattern will make everybody happy.

5 Real life also gets in the way. A parent with small children cannot always choose how to spend the afternoon. A nurse working a long shift may not have two hours for friends. Some people love being alone, while others need company. A good day for one person might feel exhausting to somebody else. Happiness is more complicated than simply adding up the right number of minutes.

6 Still, the research gives us something to think about. Small changes may help: catch up with a friend, take a short walk or put away your phone while eating dinner. Instead of trying to plan a perfect day, notice which activities leave you feeling cheerful and which make you tired. The best formula may be paying attention to your own life, then making more room for the things that matter.

Sources: PNAS Nexus. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The study proves that meeting friends makes people happier. T F NG
2. The researchers used information from two large surveys. T F NG
3. A technology company paid for the research. T F NG
4. After about two hours of socialising, extra time made little difference. T F NG
5. Very long working hours were linked with higher happiness. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

connected	exhausting	familiar	frequent	likely	perfect	useful

1. Nobody's life is _____ , so a flawless day is unrealistic.
2. Two events that are _____ often happen together, but one may not cause the other.
3. Climbing ten floors of stairs with heavy shopping is _____ .
4. A map is only _____ if you know where you want to go.
5. Dark clouds mean that rain is _____ later today.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. American scientists _____ to find out which activities made days better. (WANT)
2. The team used computer methods _____ for patterns across many activities. (LOOK)
3. Working _____ not necessarily a bad thing. (BE)
4. Very long working hours _____ with lower happiness. (LINK)
5. Happiness is more complicated than simply _____ up the right number of minutes. (ADD)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some linking words show a result (so), some show a contrast (however, while), and some set a condition (unless). Decide what the sentence needs.

because **despite** **however** **so** **therefore** **unless** **while**

1. I love long walks. _____ , I do not go when it is dark.
2. I was very tired, _____ I went to bed at eight o'clock.
3. My brother likes loud music, _____ I prefer quiet songs.
4. _____ the rain, we had a lovely day at the beach.
5. I will meet you at the cafe _____ I am late for work.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would a fixed recipe for a good day work for you?
2. Which part of a good day would you protect when life got busy?
3. Can trying too hard to have a good day spoil it?

9 Role-play: planning a free Saturday

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the sociable friend

You both have a free Saturday. You want to spend the whole day together with a big group of friends. Suggest a plan and explain why it would be a good day.

Student B · the quiet friend

You've had a very busy week and you need some time alone. Say what you'd like to do instead and try to agree on a plan that suits you both.

Useful phrases

I was thinking we could meet everyone for lunch.
That's a nice idea, but I'm really tired this week.
How about a short walk, just the two of us?
I'd rather spend the afternoon on my own.
We could do both if we keep it short.
Let's meet in the middle.

Afterwards, tell the class: what plan did you agree on, and who gave up more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 E · 3 D · 4 B · 5 C · 6 A · 7 F · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 perfect · 2 connected · 3 exhausting · 4 useful · 5 likely

6 Verb forms

1 wanted · 2 to look · 3 was · 4 were linked · 5 adding

7 Language focus

1 However · 2 so · 3 while · 4 Despite · 5 unless

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